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MGF 005-81

7 March 1981

Memorandum for : Director, FBIS
Through : Chief, Operations Group
Subject : Monthly Report-Gulf Bureau-February 1981

I. GENERAL

In response to an ad carried in two Gulf-area papers in January, appointments have been scheduled for mid-March in Abu Dhabi and Dubai with 25 candidates speaking a number of languages. We are hopeful that candidates speaking Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Pashto and Russian can be recruited. Several of the applicants appear to have very good credentials.

In a major step toward bolstering the bureau's monitorial ranks, former Medburo and Okinawa monitor [redacted] will ES DAT at Gulf sometime in April or early May. [redacted] speaks Farsi STAT Dari, Pashto and Urdu, and was a monitor in those languages in the 1960's in Cyprus and Okinawa.

Our new press intercept/television monitoring room is taking shape nicely. In addition to English-language printers, we have installed our new Arabic printers, equipment racks, and our television monitoring equipment in a small room immediately adjacent to the Arabic section. We have conducted reception checks of several Arabic and English-language press agencies and will be surveying cyrillic transmissions from the Soviet Union in the near future.

For the past several weeks we have been experimenting with mock coverage of the Gulf news agency, including QNA and ENA. Since the agency transmitts from Bahrain our reception is excellent. We print the agency throughout the transmission day, select items, and estimate the time it would take us to process them. Tentative conclusions so far indicate that if required in an emergency we could take over coverage of the agency from Jordan bureau. Our three Arabic monitors, however, would be pressed somewhat to maintain coverage over an extended periods. After we add our fourth Arabic monitor we could handle the agency easily.

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II. OPERATIONS

Editorial/Monitorial

1. The 11 February hand-over of the former U.S. Embassy in Tehran to Revolution Guards for use as a hospital was covered from Tehran Arabic and Persian-language domestic service in conjunction with the BBC. The ceremonies, at which President Bani-Sadr spoke and a message from Ayatollah Khomeyni was read, was covered by scheduling an extra Persian monitor to work the morning shift to backstop-record Tehran radio and stand by to assist BBC with processing if necessary.
2. All known Iranian regional radios were again surveyed during the month. Of those transmitters audible at Gulf bureau, only Shiraz and Ahvaz were heard broadcasting local news; the other stations relay Tehran nearly continuously with local programming, if any, consisting largely of music and religious features. Shortly after the survey was completed, however, Mashhad domestic service was heard, with very poor reception, carrying local news, providing some grounds for optimism concerning improved reception of the Iranian regionals as warmer weather approaches.
3. During the month Gulf bureau assumed the backstop role for the PARS News Agency English transmission at 0730-1030 GMT. Jordan bureau had been handling the backstop role. This is the first press agency for which Gulf bureau has had any coverage role. Reception has generally been good. The bureau has been able to assume primary coverage on several occasions late in the month when reception problems at Caversham prevented BBC from covering the service.
4. Despite repeated cruising efforts by the bureau's Azeri monitor, Tashkent Uighur broadcasts remained ellusive.
Thorough checks of times and frequencies suggested by FCS and the cruising monitors in Okinawa, Tel Aviv, Jordan and Nicosia were fruitless. A directional miniloop antenna being supplied by Nicosia bureau may help in monitoring these broadcasts.
5. Bangkok asked the bureau to temporarily assist in covering some of Bangkok's Urdu broadcasts for the next few months. The move became necessary when one of Bangkok's monitors was compelled to retire on medical grounds. The shift took

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effect on 2 March, and Gulf bureau is now covering Moscow Urdu to India 1200-1230, Moscow Urdu to Pakistan 1300-1330, and Beijing Urdu to India/Pakistan 1600-1630. Summaries are wirefiled to Bangkok for incorporation in the commentary lists it files to the tabulators in Okinawa and London bureaus.

6. The bureau was able to supply videotapes of the Islamic summit conference held in Saudi Arabia in January. Responding to VSL's filed on Riyadh television coverage of the ceremonies and proceedings of the summit conference, eight videotapes were supplied at headquarter's request. This successful effort further enhanced our fledgling Arabic staff's capabilities and has added a further dimension to the bureau's coverage.

7. The clandestine Voice of the Egyptian People radio was sampled for a 2-week period. Unfortunately, contrary to our expectations reception proved to be very poor to unmonitorable. However, we will continue to spot-check the radio periodically and report our observations and reception.

8. At the request of London PMU, Gulf bureau assumed temporary coverage of the Arabic papers Riyadh AL-JAZIRAH and Abu Dhabi AL-ITTIHAD during the illness of a PMU monitor. Coverage reverted to PMU after 2 weeks when the monitor returned to duty.

9. Continuing our effort to identify potential coverage, our monitors surveyed several Soviet regional stations 12-26 February. Although results were mixed, it was determined that Dushanbe, Tashkent, Frunze and Alma-Ata can be heard reasonably well during at least parts of the day. Further checks in the weeks ahead will be carried out on Tbilisi, Khanty-Mansiyak, Tyumen, Ufa, Omsk and other audible regionals.

10. Several items were filed on the U.S.-Omani joint military communication exercises held in Oman. Material was generated from Gulf radios and papers as well as Moscow Persian and Tashkent Uzbek Broadcasts. Responsive items were wirefiled to the usual area consumers and the special ad hoc consumer group formed by L&R.

11. At the request of FCS, we began forwarding Arabic-language recordings to headquarters for use in the training of linguists. Ten cassettes per month are being sent:

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III. ADMINISTRATION

1. In what is turning into an epidemic of pregnancies, bureau teletype operator [] took 30-days leave STAT beginning late in the month to return to India for medical treatment to insure a full term pregnancy. The [] has STAT had several disappointments in the past so are taking every precaution this time. This is the third pregnancy among bureau employees in the last few months.

2. Our experiment with part-time Farsi monitor [] STAT [] was ended in early February after it became STAT apparent that [] simply had too far to go to bring her STAT English up to a more usable level. She had made significant progress during her 2 months with us, but it became obvious that, bright as she is, her English-language training will have to be measured in terms of years and not months. We were sorry to see her go.

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Bureau Chief

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